



February 10, 2014

Delegate Cathy Vitale  
154 House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Vitale:

The Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland supports HB 44 Family Law - Temporary and Final Protective Orders - Emergency Evaluation for Mental Disorder. This bill would hasten the petition process for emergency mental evaluation when there is evidence of potential violence due to a mental disorder, facilitate intervention and treatment, and possibly save a life.

The Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland represents over 500 members and approximately 4000 nurse practitioners in Maryland. Nurse practitioners are masters degree or doctorally prepared advanced practice nurses who provide health care to all segments of the population. Nurse practitioners are educated and trained in the assessment of mental health disorders and understand the social and psychological factors contributing to abusive relationships, victimization, and violence. There are approximately 150 psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners currently providing direct mental health care in Maryland, and 3800 other nurse practitioners working in primary care, acute care, and various specialties who have opportunities to interact with people affected by mental illness.

Psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners are currently able to petition the court for emergency evaluation of mental disorders but other nurse practitioners are not authorized to do this even though they may witness a direct threat of violence. No nurse practitioners are authorized to provide the emergency evaluation and sign for a 24 hour involuntary commitment even though they may work in rural or underserved settings where they routinely provide this type of assessment. Currently 2 physician signatures are required for emergency involuntary commitment.

The Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland is committed to improving the health of Maryland citizens through professional representation and legislative advocacy for nurse practitioners across the state. We advocate for the removal of practice barriers that prevent nurse practitioners from fulfilling their full scope of practice. We are happy to provide additional information in regard to HB 44 or other health related issues.

Sincerely,

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